parts of the world; together with such observations as he may be pleased to combine with them,—such addresses being delivered by the presidents of the Royal Society, the Geographical, the Geological, the Astronomical, and the presidents of other enlightened modern societies of London.

2. That the auditors, in their next annual report, be requested to explain the charge of 447*l.* 10*s.* allowed as salary to the officers of the establishment; and to specify the sum paid to each of them,—a practice observed by auditors in other societies.

3. That the librarian be allowed hereafter a competent salary in lieu of fees; and the payment to the librarian of 2*s.* 6*d.* by each member on receiving each volume of the Transactions be abolished.

4. That a general opinion having been expressed that the office of president should not always be filled by the same individual, however accomplished and erudite he may be; that no person be allowed to hold the office of president in future beyond the term of four years.

5. That if the authors or contributors of papers deemed worthy of being read be fellows of the society, they be requested themselves to read them (unless such authors or contributors prefer that these papers be read by the secretary); and that immediately after the reading of each paper, the members of the society be invited by the chairman to make observations upon the contents of each paper.

6. That the council do meet for the despatch of the business of the society at the usual place, at three o'clock, on the first Wednesday of every calendar month, except in September and October; and that this meeting be not adjourned unless by the votes of a majority of two-thirds of the members present.

A CHAT ABOUT WESTMINSTER ABBEY AND GREAT MEN'S MONUMENTS.

BY G. GODWIN, F.R.S.*

"They dreamt not of a perishable home
Who thus could build. Be mine, in hours of fear,
Or grovelling thought, to seek a refuge here;
Or through the aisles of Westminster to roam,
Where bubbles burst, and folly's dancing foam
Melts, if it cross the threshold—"

Our metropolitan minster (*west* of St. Paul's) is perhaps without exception, the most beautiful and instructive sight in London; and yet how many inhabitants of this great city there are who but *for* the accidental visit of a country cousin, which led them to seek the Lions, had never seen it? and how many more to whom it is still unknown ground? They have travelled, perhaps, to York, to see the Minster there; they have sought objects of interest at Cologne; they have thrown their eyes round the Cathedral of Strasburgh—but Westminster Abbey, close at home, has escaped their investigating gaze. Let them lose no time in seeking it out. We feel persuaded that few can visit this wonderful museum of skill, genius, noble thoughts, and memories of good deeds, without an elevation of mind, an improvement in taste, and a chastening in feeling which must tend in a greater or less degree to good. Walk through it, examine it, study it, as often and carefully as you may, you will ever find some fresh claim on your attention, some beauty before overlooked, or some evidence of unpretending piety, which makes you prouder of humanity and more determined to do nothing derogatory in your own person. It is, indeed, a spot "where folly's dancing foam melts if it cross the threshold;" where thoughts that are unholy die; where the past great ones of six centuries speak powerfully to you—it is to be hoped, not uselessly.

"Thinke how many royall bones,
Sleep within these heap of stones.
Here they lie, had realmes and lands,
Who now want strength to lift their hands.
Where, from their pulpits seal'd with dust,
They preach, "In greatnesse is no trust!"
Here's an acre, sown indeed
With the richest royall'st seed
That the earth did e'er suck in,
Since the first man dy'd for sin."

The multitude of monuments which it contains, from that of King Henry III. upwards (omitting, for the present, any remarks on the destructive effect produced by those erected in modern times), render it an index to English history, and a commentary; while the specimens of the workmanship of different epochs in wood and stone, and glass and metal, which these and other portions of the building present, make it a lecturer on British art, and a record of its progress. Edward the Confessor's chapel, at the east end of the choir, is alone a sufficient reward for a pilgrimage of a hundred miles. Here, where old Time seems to have secluded himself from the garish present, and reigns over remnants of the past, are ranged memorials of our early sovereigns—the pious Edward, Queen Eleanor, Edward I., Henry III., Queen Philippa, Richard II. and his Queen, and the gallant Henry V. It has nothing in common with the present time: it stands alone, and cannot be realized in the mind of any one of the thronging thousands, who are passing at so short a distance from the spot, if they have not visited it. Examine the pavement, examine the shrines—the chantry of Henry V., the screen next the choir, covered with minutest sculpturing—and see how the powers of art *have* been lavished in honour of God. Our forefathers were not satisfied with the decoration of the mere face of the part in human sight—the highest exercise of their powers was deemed hardly worthy of the temple; and so long as any portion, however remote or hidden, remained capable of improvement, so long was it deemed incomplete and requiring alteration.

Strange changes have occurred since a sacred edifice first occupied this site! What if it be *not* true that the Romans had a temple to Apollo here, or that Peter the Apostle raised the first chapel in the "Thorney Island," as the place was once called? There is good reason to believe that old Sebert, king of the East Saxons did, quite at the commencement of the 7th century: and this will give us a good 1200 years to talk about.

It was at first but a small building: Edward the Confessor perhaps made it larger. "Without the walls of London," says an ancient scribe, "uppon the river of Thames, there was in times passed a little monasterie, builded in the honor of God and St. Peter with a few Benedict monks in it, under an Abbote, serving Christ: very poore they were, and little was given them for their reliefe. Here the king (Edward) intended (for that it was neare to the famous cittie of London, and the river Thames, that brought in all kind of merchandizes from all partes of the worlde) to make his sepulchre:" and so commanded that the tenth of all his possessions should be applied to its re-construction. This was probably about 1050. Hardly 200 years afterwards Henry III. went to work upon it, and erected much of what we now see, and at his own cost be it remarked, if the chroniclers speak truly. By the eighth Henry the monastery was suppressed, and Thorney Island became a city, the abbey church, its cathedral.

Of the elegance of the Abbey as a structure it is almost needless to speak: it may be termed the finest example of the pointed style of architecture ever executed in England, and remains the most complete, with the exception of the cathedral at Salisbury. The combinations which its various parts form, especially at the eastern end, are as numerous as they are striking, and serve to impress a strong conviction on the mind, of the skill of the old builders, and the power they possessed of so arranging their structures as to excite pleasurable and lofty emotions. Amongst the most striking of these combinations is that presented when standing beneath the porch of Henry VII.'s chapel, the gloom in which, most artistically devised, serves to render the full flood of light, to be found in the chapel itself, striking and effective in the highest degree. Burke remarks, in his essay on the sublime, "I think that all edifices, calculated to produce an idea of the sublime, ought rather to be dark and gloomy; and this for two reasons; the first is, that darkness itself, on other occasions, is known by experience to have a greater effect on the passions than light. The second is, that to make an object very striking, we should make it as different as possible from the objects with which we have been immediately conversant; when, therefore, you enter a building, you cannot pass into a greater light than you had in the open air: to go into one some few degrees less luminous, can make only a trifling change; but to make the transition thoroughly striking, you ought to pass from the greatest light to as much darkness as is consistent with the uses of architecture." This the architects of the middle ages well understood; they appreciated the "dim religious light," and accordingly built their ecclesiastical edifices, for the most part, with comparatively few openings. When, however, as in the case before us, the style adopted rendered larger windows necessary, they reversed the arrangement, and so still obtained the required effect.

Many of the striking combinations to which we have referred are now sadly interfered with by the modern monuments, with which the Abbey is lumbered up—monuments for the most part so absurd that they would make us laugh if they did not make us sad. Mouldings, pillars, and adornments of all descriptions have been ruthlessly cut away for them; openings have been interfered with, and even several of the spaces between the large clustered columns in the side aisles and chapels are blocked up to the top with tasteless and incongruous masses of stone and marble, alike unsuitable and discordant in colour and design.

The sculpture of the best periods of the middle ages has an entirely distinct and original character, prompted by the spirit of the time and carried out by genius. It is in no way imitated from the master-pieces of Pagan art, which might have been used as models; but is nevertheless full of feeling, and appeals to the sympathies rather than to the eye. In the ancient tombs at Westminster, as elsewhere, the sculpture is seen to be a portion of the building, conceived in the same spirit, and displaying the same feeling of reverence. All the figures are in repose, all are devotional—there is no flutter, no action even, certainly no worldly action; they do not seek to record, in vain self-glory, any moment of the past, but carry us forward to the great hereafter, and inculcate humility. Alas! how sadly this contrasts with those of more recent date, where every man "for his own hand," has worked in his own way, careless of the general effect, and has not worked well. Mountains of most *material* clouds, urns, flames, figures in ill-conceived and violent momentary action, accurate models of periwigs and whiskers, the evanescent fashions of a period of universal bad taste, form the staple—but why endeavour to prove what nearly all seem to acknowledge?*

As the writer has elsewhere remarked, in reference to the tasteless tombs and monuments with which all our cathedrals and churches have been gradually encumbered and overladen:—"Like some frightful fungus, they have spread insidiously over all parts of these structures, destroying alike their propriety, beauty, and stability." No more lamentable example of this evil is to be found than in Westminster Abbey; and it is to be hoped that efforts will be made, not simply to prevent the increase of this abomination, but, as opportunities occur from time to time, to remove the excrescences now deforming this fine pile, and so restore its harmonious proportions and original integrity. The triforium might be made to contain many of the monuments, as has been done at the Temple Church. Perhaps, too, the Chapter House, which is about to be cleared of its present contents (dirty shelves and presses), could receive some without injury to itself, so as gradually to restore to our venerable Abbey its former appearance.†

In spite, however, of the contemptible character of the records, who can look around the south transept,—the poet's corner,—without emotion? Dryden, Cowley, Chaucer, Ben Jonson, Spenser, Butler, Gay, Thompson, Goldsmith, Gray, Dr. Johnson, Shakspeare, and a score of other heroes (heart-teachers, peaceful conquerors) marshal themselves before us, although not all buried here, and people the quiet aisles.

Nothing tends more strongly to elevate and refine the mind, to incite to virtue, or to deter from vice, than the contemplation of the burial-place of one who has rendered himself in either of these particulars an object of regard. The

* From "Facts and Fancies."

* One of Churchill's earliest effusions (before 1758) was prompted by these incongruous monuments. It commences—

"In famed cathedral who'd expect
Pallas, a heathen goddess,
To lift her shield, come to protect
Lord Stanhope?—this most odd is."

See Mr. W. Tooke's admirable edition of his poems, 1844.

† This suggestion was originally published by the writer in April 1843. It has been since urged by others.

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